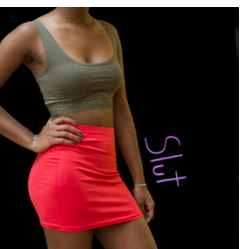


SEX AND EDUCATION

13 FRESHMEN ADDRESS AND DEBATE TOPICS RELATED TO SEXUAL ASSAULT ON THE AMHERST CAMPUS



Representing Equality

Last year's publicity about sexual assaults on the Amherst campus happened at a time when we had a President eager to take up the challenge to fight for equality and safety for students. My friend and colleague, Wendy Ewald, and I decided to take the issue up within the curriculum as a First Year Seminar, both to educate entering students about the problem and its broader background, and to engage them in thinking about how to improve our community and help diminish the alienation and social fragmentation that can produce these violations of one another.

We decided to study sexual assault in various contexts, to discuss some of the many kinds of inequalities that make sexual assault and other kinds of oppression likely, all the while trying to keep our campus life in mind. The artist, Harrell Fletcher, collaborated with us on creating a project that would help reopen a campus-wide discussion of sexual assault, inequality and other aspects of the social scene that are associated with sexual assault including alcohol. The project he developed is also a model for building bridges between disparate groups on campus and bringing students together through discussion, interviews, entertainment, and an inclusive community event.

First year students encountered some obstacles along the way to completing this project. By definition, they arrived knowing relatively little about the college, and the horrific events of our readings did not naturally

connect with their experience of campus life, nor should they—this is not a war zone or the Deep South during Jim Crow, even if the humiliation and subordination of victims is parallel. Students also encountered the famous problem posed by an older fish who asks a young fish how she likes the water, and she replies, "What's water?" First Year Students are studying hard and simultaneously trying to find their way into groups where they will feel comfortable and replace the loss of their familiar home lives with strong, new ties. It is hard to become fully aware, much less sharply critical, of the institution and people that are providing you a new and exciting life. Still, students have created powerful images and developed important themes and debate topics relating to sexual assault. Everyone has worked hard, and we think our efforts are enlightening, constructive, and in some cases entertaining. We hope they will initiate further conversations and perhaps other projects that will knit us together more firmly and respectfully.

—Martha Saxton

An Outsider's Assignment

Wendy Ewald asked me to work with her and a freshman seminar class she was teaching with Martha Saxton. The class was intended to address issues related to sexual assault on the Amherst campus. It was a daunting challenge. The more I learned the more difficult it became to think of ways to approach the subject in terms of an art project of some sort. We decided to start by having the students interview people on campus to attempt to understand the range of perspectives that existed. The students came up with questions of their own and used some from the list below that I created:

What was your first sexual experience? Do you feel like you have ever been sexually assaulted? If so, what were the circumstances? Have you ever deflected an unwanted sexual advance? If so, how did you do that? What does dating mean to you? At what point in dating someone is it appropriate to engage in sexual activity? What kinds of activities? Do you use safe sex practices? What is safe sex? What constitutes a sexual assault? What should the repercussions be for a student who has been proven to have sexually assaulted another student? Is it possible that someone can be falsely accused of sexual assault? What were the sexual dynamics of pre-agricultural humans? What are the sexual dynamics of other primates? Is monogamy the answer? Is monogamy a problem? What sort of formal sex education have you received? What sort

of casual sex education have you received?

Reading the interviews left me even more uncertain about how to proceed. I came to campus for a visit (I live in Portland, Oregon). I was given a campus tour with descriptions of the various locations in which sexual assault might occur. I learned about the conflicted history of co-education on campus. Terms like "cuffing" and "hooking up" were explained to me. I still didn't know what to do in regard to a class project. One of the students mentioned having been on a debate team in high school. It occurred to me that a "debate" of sorts might be a good way to present a variety of the perspectives I'd encountered. There was some resistance to the idea, and concern that it would be too antagonistic. But I liked the way that a debate could involve many people with multiple viewpoints and be presented publicly. So instead of a traditional oppositional debate, we decided to use the debate form but to leave it more open ended, more about presenting different aspects of the same general topic. Along with the public event, which takes place on Dec. 9th, 2013, we also created this publication so that everyone on campus could have a copy. We hope that it will increase understanding of sexual assault and what might be done to mitigate it in the future.

—Harrell Fletcher

THE STRUGGLE

JIA Y. LIANG

When I was a child, my grandmother would fawn over my cousin Skylar, asking if he wanted new toy cars, making sure he was always comfortable, all the while ignoring my presence. I was five. I didn’t understand what was happening until recently, when I realized how biased my grandmother had been. My chubby cousin was a precious child for sure, but most importantly, Skylar was a boy and therefore superior to my female self.

Five-year-old me didn’t know about gender equality, she only knew that something wasn’t fair. Fast-forward thirteen years, and I can still only say that something is wrong, though I feel that I am not alone in this. We all know (for the most part) what gender inequality looks, sounds, and feels like, yet we seem to be incapable of agreeing upon a fixed definition of equality. So what is gender equality, at least to college students? As one junior sees it, “people aren’t actually the same...we might want to treat them a little differently,” while “not assuming differences we don’t know are there” such as the idea that boys are better at math. For him, gender equality is simply “equality of respect.” But most students are inclined to use arguments based upon universal principles.

For all that we profess support for gender equality—however we define it—disparities between treatments of men and women still exist. Even in the highly liberal environment of Amherst, we are only just beginning to address gender equality after the publicized rape of Angie Epifano. The problem, though obvious, is not, however, overt; walking around a campus where people now pay a lot of attention to sexual respect, you probably wouldn’t hear someone openly calling girls sluts or making sexist jokes. Inequality is more covert, made evident to one person by the hook-up culture. In his experience, guys speak casually about their hook-ups, while girls refer to hook-ups in sarcastic, self-deprecating tones. Their tones reflect a double standard in the way men and women are perceived by peers and are expected to perceive themselves. Generally, we call a guy who has many hook ups a “stud”—a “playa”, if you will, while a girl who hooks up a lot is a “slut.”

Gender inequality, even in a subtle form, invites destructive behavior, such as sexual assault. Propagating degradation of either gender suggests that one group can treat the other as unequal, or subhuman. This flawed attitude may help perpetrators justify their actions and ease their consciences. I say either gender here, because although women are more commonly victims, as one upperclassman reminded me,

Sexual assault happens both ways. My friend was telling me about this case where a girl just came up to him and grabbed his private part... why would you consider that an assault?

Well, you’re doing something without the other’s permission, and you’re infringing on their liberties to walk around without having their private parts grabbed....

Students seem to agree that the college has been making a decent effort to end, at the very least, overtly gender biased behavior. The reworking of freshman orientation to emphasize sexual respect indicates the dedication of staff to changing the atmosphere on campus. However, as one freshman mused, it is one thing to prevent public bigotry, but another entirely to prevent private prejudices. That is a struggle that we as students must confront ourselves.



HOW GENDER STEREOTYPES AND DOUBLE STANDARDS CREATE THOSE “BLURRED LINES”

GABRIELLA RODRIGUEZ

Stereotypes are the unfair beliefs that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same. A double standard is a set of principles that applies differently, and usually more rigorously, to one group than to another. Stereotypes and double standards can perpetuate sexual assault, both on and off college campuses.

Between the sexes, men are expected to be the stronger, more successful members of society, while lacking (or at least concealing) true and intimate emotions in fear of being too feminine. Women are supposed to be emotional and are deemed the caretakers and the cheerleaders who are expected to obediently root for their significant others from the sidelines. Though there is a general recognition that these stereotypes are exaggerated and, to an extent untrue, there is simultaneously a general acceptance that this is the way things are. When asked about these caricatures of gender, Emily Fitts, a freshman, commented:

I think the problem with...those stereotypes is there’s no wiggle room. So if you’re an emotional guy then you’re thought of as a sissy, and if you’re a removed girl who’s fine with just having emotionless flings then something is wrong with you. ...I think I still kind’ve conform to [the stereotypes] because it seems natural to me. I think that’s the problem with...stereotypes in general. They are... really hard to get rid of because they are... so instinctive to most people.

Similarly, sexual double standards have become almost “natural” to accept. Accordingly, men are praised for having (heterosexual) sexual relations with a plethora of women whereas women are deemed “easy” and are belittled for the exact same behavior. For men, however, it’s a win-win. If you “hook-up” with a lot of women, you are congratulated by your male friends. If you don’t like to hook-up a lot, you are sensitive, and girls are even more attracted to you for that reason.

North Dormitory’s RC Elizabeth Hall explains that stereotypes and double standards foster a “perfect storm for sexual assault,” by desensitizing men and women to the severity of the situation with jokes and common conversation using stereotypical ideas.

BH: Sexual assault includes any kind of verbal, physical attack...any kind of threat that is not consensual. Like if someone is throwing slurs at you, or making you feel uncomfortable about your body, that’s sexual assault. A lot of things that go unchecked are sexual assault, technically. From a girl’s perspective stereotypes would

reinforce the invisibility/legitimacy of sexual assault; ‘Ok well this is just how things are. I should just listen, I don’t want to make him mad,’ thinking that it doesn’t matter what she wants. From the guy’s perspective, if a girl doesn’t want to have sex with him, she’s a bitch, she sucks.

I think what frustrates me is that I consider myself a strong feminist, and for so long I didn’t use my voice, and I didn’t assert myself. But now I can, and I am so much more comfortable challenging people and knowing that I can be right. On campus people still think rape jokes are funny, jokes about women in the kitchen are funny, kind’ve making the perfect storm for sexual assault. It’s made me realize I want people to know how to stand up...and speak up because silence is...being ok with it. I wish I had done many things differently my freshman year, and that has really encouraged me to become an RC and to work with a group of freshman that feel like they can challenge things and feel good about it.

Stepping out of these tight gender boxes requires acute courage and an irrefutable desire for change. Don’t call that girl “thirsty” because she’s hooked up with more than one person, and don’t congratulate that guy for “f***** and chucking” the third girl in one month. Figure out where you stand on these issues, and don’t be afraid to voice your opinions.

ON GHOSTS: THE “AMHERST ETHOS”

CASSANDRA HRADIL

The past has a way of seeping into its surroundings. Sophomore Lilia Paz’s statement, said of the college: “I’m in a place full of ghosts.” She told me that at last year’s women of color retreat, the alumnae from the first co-ed class who graduated from Amherst said “going to Amherst was so hard, a lot of them took gap years or dropped out.... I feel like if I went into the core of Amherst, I’d find a lot of misery there.”

I’ve found as much contention over Amherst’s going co-ed as there is over sexual respect now. Some people, like Lilia, see Amherst’s transition from an all-men’s school as unhappy, while others—like Professor Rebecca Sinos, arriving in 1980—found Amherst “a great place, welcoming and encouraging.” In the conflicting memories of the history of co-education at the school, we can find parallels to our current problems with sexual violence and perhaps have a more productive understanding of where we are now.

In 1975, the first female students were admitted to the college, transfers from a Five College program. The first co-ed class graduated in 1976. Professor Catherine Ciepiela, who was a member of one of those early classes (1983) remarks on the commonalities between then and now: “While Amherst College had the best intentions when they finally admitted women to this campus, the institution was not prepared for their arrival.... Similarly, despite the good efforts of some members of the staff and administration, our system was not really prepared to handle last year’s (sexual assault) cases well.” Prof. Ciepiela targets the fraternities—which played host to “a lot of unacknowledged sexual violence”—until their abolition in 1986 as an important cause of women students’ problems. Lilia also cites the College’s underground frats as a major issue that still needs to be resolved; most recently they were responsible for the misogynistic t-shirts of last year. Dean Patricia O’Hara, identified the low point for women as a one-year period in the late 1970s when eight women faculty departed. In October of 1984, an *ad hoc* Committee of Six published a report on the conditions of work for female faculty at Amherst, including the departure of three women in 1979, who explained that the “day to day disparagement they encountered showed no sign of abating after six years...the particular Amherst ethos was cited by several women.” The report adds, “There seems to be a kind of sacramental aspect to life at Amherst which casts criticism, no matter how concerned and committed, as a species of desecration” (*Ad Hoc* Report 62).

What was this problematic “Amherst ethos” and “sacramental aspect to life” which the report mentions? Professor Rhonda Cobham-Sander explains it as a “traditional air of being an all male college.” Since she joined the faculty in 1986, she has served

in various administrative positions, which have taught her much about how change works at this school. She believes that Amherst has great potential for progress, but it goes about it in an unusual way: “As soon as change becomes accepted, it’s...[reincorporated] as tradition.” Once an idea catches on here, she explains, it has staying power, but until it does, there will be resistance.

So, how do we get from resistance to tradition? Prof. Cobham-Sander says the key is to “make people feel they have a stake in this change.” At Amherst, this kind of investment always takes place through dialogue but opportunities are limited. The 1984 committee report noted that faculty “still lack possibilities for conversation somewhere between...self-consciously public performances and the often unreliable modes of private talk...we hope for several kinds of gatherings, small and large, formal and less so” (22). Such conversations occurred during last year’s Day of Dialogue and Orientation. Freshman Carina Corbin “really liked...a smaller group of people so it felt a little bit more personal” during discussions at orientation.

A historical perspective also illuminates ways that change can be postponed and problems explained away. The 1984 report claimed that “certain unconstructive aspects of the conditions of work here are ones that exist in society itself” (3). But we should be sure we do not take the argument that because sexual assault is a societal (and indeed, a nationwide campus) problem means that we can excuse or move slowly on our own problems.

Nearly thirty years ago Amherst women faculty said that “the frequent invocation of what has happened in the College in the last...thirty, or forty years seemed to them a reminder that there was an exclusive body of inevitably male knowledge.... It is not ‘their’ history, as it is not the history of those who are not white.” Almost three decades later, women *do* have a past here. We can use our history as a precedent and a guide to make this campus a safer place for everyone.

“Shall We Admit Women?” Editorial. *The Amherst Student* 30 Sept. 1871: n. pag. *Five College Archives Digital Access Project*. Web. 9 Nov. 2013.

Dickerman, Dorothea. “So This Is Amherst.” Editorial. *The Amherst Student* 1 May 1980: n. pag. *Five College Archives Digital Access Project*. Web. 9 Nov. 2013.

“Two Alumni Regret Amherst Becoming A Coed College.” *Holyoke Telegram Transcript* 4 Nov. 1974: n. pag. *Five College Archives Digital Access Project*. Web. 9 Nov. 2013.

Kiesel, Alyson, and Belèn Rodas. “Homecoming Weekend Reveals Gender Exclusion.” Editorial. *The Indicator* 21 Nov. 1996: n. pag. *Five College Archives Digital Access Project*. Web. 9 Nov. 2013.

TRADITIONAL TENSION

MORGAN MCGANN

*With every turn of time’s great wheel
Thy noble sons increase*

A September 1871 op-ed in *The Amherst Student* asked a seemingly simple question: “Shall we admit women?” In it, a student argues that Amherst College should not because

Amherst College was never intended for the education of females. Neither in the foundation of the College, nor in the establishment of its professorships; neither in the erection and arrangement of its buildings, nor its course of study, as originally laid down...the general administration of the college, whereby its usefulness has been enhanced and its character and standing elevated, have the peculiar wants and requirements of women been taken into consideration.

The college would not go coeducational for another century, and this sentiment would not completely die. Amherst College puts a heavy emphasis on tradition. According to alumnus Dr. David B. Truman, former president of Mount Holyoke College, Amherst lost its identity by going coeducational. Another alumnus, Judge Russell L. Davenport, said he was disappointed in Amherst’s decision to follow in the footsteps of the many other schools that had begun to admit women.

Amherst had undeniably been reborn, but the process was tumultuous. After four fully co-ed classes, the institution clung onto its traditional, single-sex self. In her 1980 op-ed: “So this is Amherst”, student Dorothea Dickerman wrote: “The responsibility to co-educate was on you. When you encountered an obstacle in a vestige of maleness, you ignored it as you ignore the ‘jock’ on the gym clothes order forms, or molded it to your purpose as you planted an avocado tree in the urinal in the bathroom.” The school placed the entire burden of assimilation on its new students. To react badly to incidences of sexism, in Dickerman’s words not only, “wasn’t the coeducational spirit,” but also was considered “bitching.” A school where the sexes were equal wasn’t the reality. In its place was an institution where complaining wasn’t socially acceptable.

A 1996 incident crystallized Amherst women’s struggle. When asked to sing old Amherst songs at an alumni banquet, female students requested that the lyrics of various classic Amherst songs be updated to reflect the institution’s then twenty-year-old status as a co-educational institution. Their request was declined on the basis that the changes would be “unsettling” to the alumni. “We could never explain how marginalized we felt, watching the carefully

prepared Amherst propaganda film...or how ashamed we felt as performers and women to be part of something so disgraceful”, wrote Belen Rodas and Alyson Kiesel. The money and influence of alumni superseded a full welcome for women students.

Reconciling the desire to be an institution that adheres to numerous traditions and the desire to be an institution that includes women as equals is far from simple, especially when those traditions were exclusive to men for so long. New traditions must be made, and maintenance of exclusive ones cannot continue if the sexes are to be on equal footing at Amherst College.



SEXUAL ASSAULT NATIONWIDE

EMILY HESTER

By now, many if not all of us as students at Amherst know the shocking statistic that 1 in 5 women will be sexually assaulted in college. As a school that must live with the events that came to light on campus last year, I think it would be fair to say that the issue of sexual assault no longer remains stored under some ancient and untouchable rug never to be discussed. However, although discussed, the issue has by no means been solved at Amherst. As a first year, I had the issue of sexual assault thrown at me in every way possible during orientation, so often that the concept of consent turned into a joke rather than a legitimate topic of discussion.

Sexual assault happens at Amherst, but it also happens at other schools, and other schools have responded in similar and unfortunate ways. Other institutions that have had trouble handling incidents of sexual misconduct properly include Dartmouth, Vanderbilt, Notre Dame, and the University of Wisconsin. The stories read differently, in victim outcome, but similarly in terms of negligence on behalf of the school. At Notre Dame, the school took two weeks before beginning to interview the perpetrator of Lizzy Seeborg’s rape, and tragically, Seeborg committed suicide before the school began its investigation. Similarly negligent, Vanderbilt University had disregarded sexual assault incidents for years according to students, but was recently faced with a federal complaint filed by several current and former student assault victims about the mishandling of their cases, most recently a case where local authorities were called to deal with the repeated rape of an unconscious female student in June. The other responses read similarly. Rather than acting quickly and on behalf of the victim, the schools aimed to protect themselves by protecting the perpetrators and keeping quiet.

Unfortunately for them, there are laws against this sort of behavior. Common to all of these cases above are their possible Title IX and Clery Act violations. The Clery Act, named after Jeanne Clery, a student and sexual assault victim, aims to prevent violence and sexual abuse on college campuses by forcing colleges to publish an annual security report, maintain a public crime log, and disclose crime statistics for incidents that occur on college campuses. A study done by NPR found that “of about 130 colleges and universities that were given federal grants because they wanted to do a better job dealing with sexual assault...the database shows that even when men at those schools were found responsible for sexual assault, only 10 to 25 percent of them were expelled,” (NPR). Some campuses are beginning to see higher sexual assault reports, and are pleased because higher numbers of sexual assault reports mean that colleges have succeeded in creating spaces where victims are comfortable speaking out about their assaults.

While campuses across the country feel that they are beginning to make strides in creating safe spaces and advocating for consent, some have been more successful than others. UCLA, Whitman College, Connecticut College, The University of Oregon, and Arizona State were all recently honored for their promotions of consent on campus. By far the most intriguing campaign was Conn College’s youtube video entitled The Vagina Monologues at Connecticut College, that shows 80 men discussing different reasons why vaginas are important to them, and why other people should care about protecting the women that possess them. Rather than turning consent into a joke as one might think it would, this video powerfully depicts how both men and women can rally around the issue of consent and reject sexual assault.

Consent should never become a joke, no matter how often it is discussed. Sexual assault negligence happens everywhere, because colleges are afraid of bad publicity and losing applicants. While we all may know the unfortunate statistics, most of us do not focus on sexual assault until we are ourselves—or know someone that has been—affected by it. At Amherst we must choose not to be bystanders and instead act when we see something going wrong, and act as an institution to protect our students. It’s hard to ask for help, and equally as hard to admit there are assaults on an institution’s students, but for the safety and well-being of everyone both we as students and the administration should act on behalf of victims.



SHADES OF BLACK, WHITE, AND RAPE

ELLA COHEN

I believe that the first step in addressing sexual assault on campuses lies in defining it. Then, we must decide the punishments that each infraction merits. In Massachusetts, the legal definition of sexual assault is as follows:

*Sexual assault and rape are crimes of violence and control, using sex acts as a weapon. Rape and sexual assault are not sexually motivated acts; rather, they stem from aggression, rage, sexism, and the determination to exercise power over someone else. Rape is also a legal term that is defined in Massachusetts by three elements: penetration of any orifice by any object; force or threat of force; against the will of the victim. Sexual assault is often more broadly defined as any sexual activity that is forced or coerced or unwanted.*¹

Clearly there are different types, and possibly levels, of sexual assault, which left me wondering about other sorts of transgressions that I might categorize as types of sexual assault. Is pinching a woman’s butt without her consent sexual assault? I know that if someone were to do that to me, I would feel violated. What about cat-calling and wolf-whistling? Many people might not recognize these as sexual assault because they are not violent, just sudden or unwanted. The common link among all these actions, however, is unwanted sexual attention, and the Massachusetts stature makes this connection. At Amherst any sort of unwanted sexual attention is considered sexual assault, although much of it goes unchallenged. In my mind, the best way to prevent all these acts is to show clearly that we will not tolerate any behavior of this nature; there should be repercussions that vary based on the severity of the action.

Deciding punishments is made more difficult because so much sexual assault is committed under the influence of alcohol. As African History Professor Sean Redding said,

I think there’s actually tolerance for use of alcohol on campus by people who are legally not supposed to be using alcohol, and I think that, if you tolerate that, then people think, “why can’t I get away with other stuff?” And then it becomes very hard for the College to intervene, because it looks like they’ll tolerate something, but not another thing...I don’t think you can talk about sexual assault without talking about the role of alcohol, and that means that [the College] must be more consistent.

Patricia O’Hara, the Dean of First Year Students and a chemistry professor, told me that she thought that if

the sexual assault was of a lesser magnitude, the punishment could be educational. It might require having to leave the college for some period of time, demonstrating rehabilitation, and then probation for the rest of the time the person was at the college. If it’s a higher magnitude, and I don’t even know exactly where to draw the line, but obviously in the case of rape, I would think that the punishment should be expulsion.

Joyce Wamala, a first year student, said that she thought that punishments

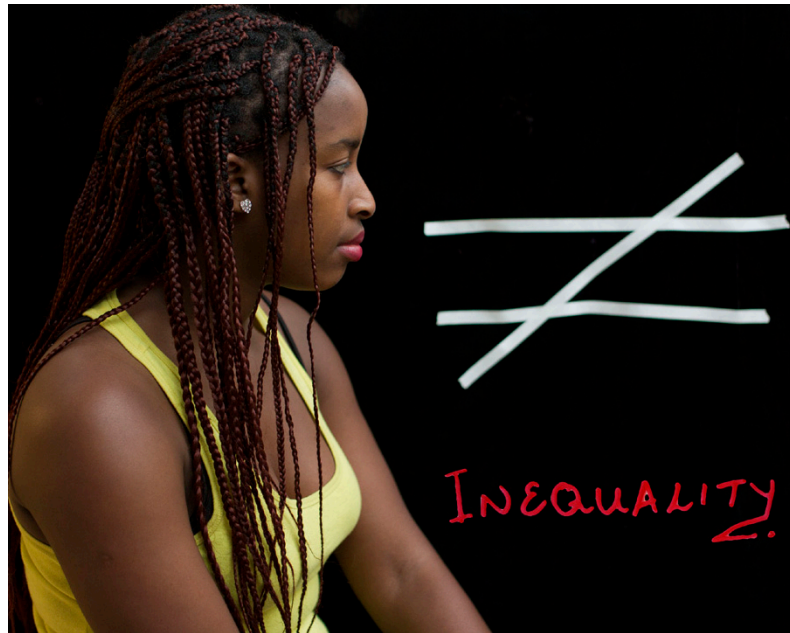
should be in degrees. So maybe the first time that you’re taken to trial, you could have a black mark or something. And then, if you get two black marks, you’re expelled. I think people should be so scared to even be accused of doing it in the first place!

I think Dean O’Hara and Joyce are entirely correct, but first we need to come up with a working definition of each level of sexual assault. I think something like cat-calling could be called misconduct. When it comes to unwanted touching, maybe people should be required to attend a course on sexual respect. This list of offenses could go on for a long time before arriving at rape.

Another important question connected to the problem of punishing rape on college campuses is whether or not accused students should undergo a legal trial. Joyce thought that students *should* be taken to trial: “it should be both a school thing and an actual legal trial.” But, as Professor Sean Redding noted, many sexual assaults occur under the influence of alcohol, which renders evidence less reliable. Still, I believe that, even with the presence of alcohol, there should be some sort of legal proceeding for rape cases. In the “real world”, if, for example, a person high on PCP murdered someone, that person would still be held accountable. I don’t see why it should be any different for people accused of committing sexual assault while intoxicated.

I hope that the Amherst community will come together to create a working definition of sexual assault and, more important, figure out ways to prevent it.

1. The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. “Definition of a Sexual Assault” *Definition of a Sexual Assault*. <<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/crime-prev-personal-sfty/personal-sfty/sexual-and-dom-viol/overview/definition-of-a-sexual-assault.html>>.



AMHERST DIVIDED?

SAMUEL KORNTNER

Amherst College is known for its diverse student body. It is true that Amherst’s student body comes from all over the world; however, often Amherst students say that despite our school’s diversity we have a tendency to separate. “Amherst is segregated. I’m not going to sit here and lie to you. We have many different divisions. We have racial divisions, we have extra curricular divisions, we have scholastic divisions...” said Chloe McKenzie. Louise Atadja says:

Amherst just has those grid lines, that nobody likes crossing...I think people at Amherst like to think that we are so diverse, because we have so many different groups, but people within those groups don't really like to intermingle.

According Chris Baldi, “The biggest segregation at Amherst is probably athletes vs. non-athletes.” a statement that is commonly accepted by students. Due to the lack of interaction among some of the student groups, many stereotypes have developed which unfairly portray student athletes in a negative light. Chloe McKenzie describes the stereotypical Amherst athlete man as “cocky, overly confident; he preys, he is mildly respectful until he has the ‘green light’. He hooks up; in the morning he’ll try to be nice, in the afternoon he’ll walk right by you.” These incidents foster division, and it is wrong to prejudge all student-athletes under this light.

The divisions among groups on campus can be part of the cause of the sexual assault problem. Sean Redding, Professor of History says,

It has to do with people falling into cliques and not really understanding the members of the other cliques, and not being able to bridge that divide. I think it also means that people aren't really looking out for each other. And a lot of studies suggest that you're protected from things like sexual assault by those around you, so if they don't feel like they have any connection to you or don't feel any sort of responsibility for you, they're not going to protect you, and that can set the stage for sexual assault.

Not only athletes are segregated, but many other groups on campus as well. I am part of the oldest continuous all male *a capella* group on campus: the Zumbyes. The Zumbyes are an incredibly close group that spends a huge amount of time together not just to sing, but to socialize as well. It is common for groups at Amherst to be both extracurricular organizations and social ones as well. Through the organizations, students create strong connections that are based on common interests, and by their nature they have become a little exclusive. However, as with the

exclusivity of athletes, this can foster misunderstanding, misconceptions, and stereotypes. Often times Zumbyes are described as “arrogant and self-centered.” But what some people perceive to be arrogance is really the pride we have in being part of an important legacy. These statements often come from students who have never seen one of our performances or who don’t really know much about us. It is unfair to call us arrogant and self-centered when one doesn’t really understand what our group is about. These false stereotypes can scare off interactions and broaden the divisions among the student groups of our campus, and thus are ultimately connected to the larger problem of sexual assault.

THE SOCIALS

LUCAS ZELLER

Three years from now, the buildings on campus collectively known as the “socials” will be torn down. The socials are a collection of suite-styled dorms where most of the on-campus partying happens. They are some of the most controversial, loved, and disliked buildings on campus. Seniors on the varsity sports teams at Amherst choose to live together in these suites in order to throw parties for their teams. The suites and the parties are referred to by the teams that live in them, like the “baseball suite” or the “hockey party”. The other kind of party is a mixer—when one team, often a varsity team, has a party exclusively with another team. These two kinds of parties make up the vast majority of parties on campus.

It's my first year living here in the socials. Having a single is great. I don't mind it being mustier than other places. It's not that dirty. I get to see the people I know. So it's not like I have to hang out at those stupid parties. We have tennis girls that live two suites down and the rest are football guys around us—they're so busy—but we interact with them. I don't mind the party scene because I know almost everyone here. I have a ton of friends so I can hang out outside. It's better than nothing.

Last year I lived in Coolidge and we'd have our parties in the basement. Our first five parties got broken up by the cops within the first hour and a half—and at our banquet too. We're going to have a banquet this year, so it might get broken up again.

The whole social scene is so sports team-centric that I feel like anyone that is not on a sports team will at some point feel left out.

I like the concept of mixers. They're one of the few ways people choose to interact. The only two options are like pre-gaming or drinking. I wish I could have just friends over, but it's so sport team centric that you can't.

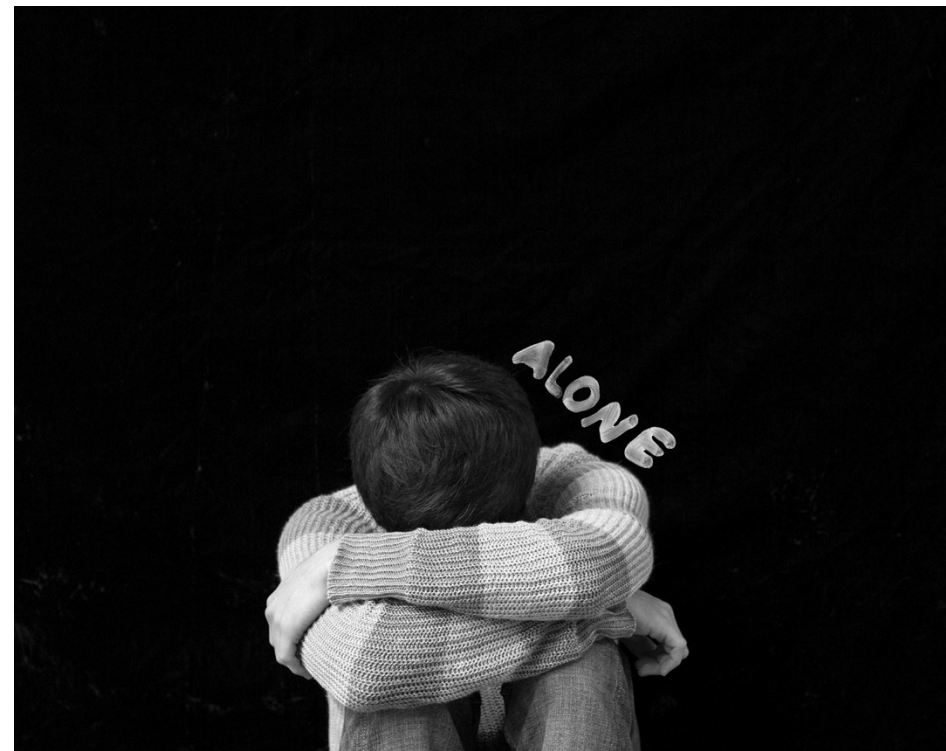
It gets annoying. The socials are our only option but it's a shame you have to be drunk to enjoy them. Some people think they're hilarious. The other option is dancing. The dance parties on Saturday night where everyone is at the same party are kind of horrible, but the ones in our suite are cool because they're not as crowded. They break up earlier—12:30, 1:00. The problem is there just isn't room.

Most people recognize that it would be better if we had other options and most people think

you have to be pretty drunk to enjoy what we have now. The Zu [an off-campus residence where students cook their own food] is twenty times better because there's diversity and room to talk.

The socials are where most of the partying and drunk activities happen at Amherst, and along with that can come—has come—sexual assault and a general lack of sexual respect. It does “encourage the hook-up culture because there’s no real space to meet people and talk to people. It’s all just dancing and loud music” a resident of the socials told me.

What will the social scene be like once the socials are demolished in the coming years? There will still be a drinking and partying culture on campus. Where will these parties happen? What will the atmosphere be like? How will the new dorms be designed? If the new dorms have suites with more and larger common rooms than the socials currently have, then it is possible that parties could better facilitate forming real relationships, rather than hook-ups. Even though many people are dissatisfied with the social scene here, it is difficult to make changes. Still, the consensus is that people believe that it can be better and that they want it to be better.



REPRESENTING EQUALITY

SAMANTHA TATENDA NYOVANIE

Amherst College views diversity as a benefit for the community, but once implemented, some of the resulting experiences are not as expected. Three out of four Amherst students I interviewed felt excluded from a group because they felt others thought they were different or because they thought they were different from others. It’s these differences that Amherst seeks to bridge through having a diverse community; however, an alumnus and current member of staff, Dexter Padayachee finds the school still fairly separated. He says, “What happened to the enthusiasm of getting to know other cultures that students had just before they arrived at Amherst?”

On inquiring why Amherst seeks to have a diverse community, Caitlin Brome, Assistant Dean of Admission and Coordinator of International Recruitment says,

From my perspective, we hope to have a diverse community in order to give our students the chance to learn not only from the course material they study but from their peers as well. In order to prepare our students to thrive in a globalized environment, I think it’s important to interact in a personal way with people who both support you and challenge you.

In less than a month of being a freshman, one student felt left out, while sitting in a common room with Asians (he is not Asian). They simply ignored him and gave a cold shoulder to his attempts to join in the conversation. “It was awkward, but that’s the way it is” he said. Is it really the way it should be? Catlin Broome says,

Recognizing your own biases and the biases of others can be uncomfortable, and it can be an extremely personal process that happens in a public place. I think there’s a lot of fear in working across dividing lines—there are many people who feel defensive about one aspect of their identity or another, or perhaps they feel apprehensive that something they know will be threatened by new ideas. Finding ways to talk about some of these very personal topics in productive ways and without offending others can be challenging on many levels.

On this campus a lot of misinterpretations and misunderstandings are quite prevalent simply because one does not fully understand others from a different background.

A friend of mine found a guy of a different ethnicity flirtatious as he treated all girls in the same affectionate way. She thought that was how a guy should only treat his girlfriend. As she came

to know him, she realized that in his culture, people were quite affectionate and in fact men treated women very well and with high respect. A couple of my friends have been perceived as ‘too forward’ but in actual fact, in their cultures, they have been brought up to be very friendly and open. Not fully understanding the different cultures on campus may lead to conflict or even terrible experiences when people make assumptions or generalizations about others.



DOES DIVERSITY MEAN SEXUAL EQUALITY?

ZIXI LIANG

“Diversity,” how many times we have heard of this word during our time at Amherst! There is no doubt—at least the administration so believes—that in this day and age, recognizing diversity is essential. But how, exactly, is diversity important? Why is diversity good, and how does it contribute to equality—in particular, sexual equality—here at Amherst?

One of the best interpretations of “equality”, I think, comes from Zakiy Gharad, a freshman at Amherst: “Equality would be viewing people as dignified and inherently valuable, not based on things like race and gender, but on just the fact that they are human beings.”

The questions are, then: Will the presence of a diverse group of people really help us “embrace” our differences? When we look at a person of different race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, do we see that person as a valuable individual—and our equal?

Not all of us, unfortunately.

Sexual inequality has been a prevalent issue in most parts of the world—diverse or not—for as long as anyone can remember. As time passed, the rights women strived for also changed. In the eye of Tom Straford, a custodian who has worked at Amherst for over thirty-five years, sexual equality means that women can work outside of the household and be treated well by their husbands. “‘Is he a gentleman?’ It’s all that needs to be said.” This is how he described his feelings towards college students dating.

Obviously, the attitude toward sexual equality has changed drastically from when Tom first started working here to today. A word that Tom had probably never heard used during his early years at Amherst, but nowadays appears almost as frequently as “diversity,” is “consent.” It does not simply involve the male being a gentleman—it requires both parties to be equally alert. “I think that consent is a blurry thing, because there can be nonverbal ways of showing you’re not interested...and it’s hard to recognize that,” said a freshman RC; “it becomes an issue if [your partner is]...unable to recognize these signs.” In her opinion, not recognizing consent would constitute sexual assault.

Views of sexual equality not only differ across generations, but also change from society to society, and this is where diversity really comes into the equation. When asked about the “hookup culture” at Amherst, a freshman said, “I think it’s great! It’s very fun and allows for a lot of different experiences, and you end up with a broader perspective of what people are like in different contexts.” The problem, however, is that not all of the students here are privileged to have such an open mind—some, as a matter of fact, might have their opinions on sexual equality negatively influenced by their upbringing in societies that lacked diversity—what freshman Michael Bessey described

CAMPUS FASHION: WHAT YOU WEAR ON A SATURDAY NIGHT AND WHY

TAYLOR THOMAS

How does Amherst campus fashion bridge the gap between how we see ourselves and how we want to be seen? Considering personal style and Amherst’s party culture, I decided to interview people on campus about their take on the fashion and social dynamics of a typical Saturday night. I began by asking each interviewee to put together an outfit they would wear on a night out, and explain why they would wear it.

I asked Anna what she wears when she is going out on the weekend?

A dark black skirt, that’s short, and a red tank top. The socials are really hot, so I like to wear less clothing. And, the black and red look good together.

It’s comfortable, and it shows off my legs. There’s not a particular message, just that I’m out to have fun.

Can people be judged by their fashion?

It’s not a bad way to judge someone, because I do feel like clothes are an expression of people’s identity. So, if they’re wearing something that says something about them, I don’t think they can be angry or upset when people use their looks as a way to view them. If you’re not wearing clothes, then you’re expressing something about you, and that’s fine, but social norms have it that you should wear clothing that covers certain parts of your body. If you’re exposing some of that, then you’re going to be judged. That’s just the way it is.

Have you ever thought of dressing a different way?

I have, but I realized it would be unacceptable in the eyes of other people if I dressed in a different way, because girls are expected to look a certain way, and the couch potato look is not acceptable. I don’t mind so much because I really wouldn’t like it if guys looked grimy either.

I asked Sarah to describe the outfit she picked out?

A mocha and crème colored maxi dress with a keyhole opening in the front, and crisscrossed spaghetti straps. It makes me feel good (laughter). It makes me feel pretty. I take pride in my appearance. Not to the point where I’m getting too much attention, but I like to feel good. It’s just whatever I’ll feel confident in that night.

Do you think there are unacceptable ways to dress?

It’s your body; you can dress however you want. Personally, I would never want to dress in something that’s too revealing. It’s just like “save something to the imagination.”

Do you think people are judged by what they wear?

Yeah, girls more so than guys. It’s one of those lovely double standards we get to live with. Guys go out wearing weird things, or half naked and it’s not a big deal. But, if a girl does that, people call her a slut. I think girls are expected to dress a certain way. Going to the socials you’re supposed to look really good, wearing tight, short clothing.

Is there a double standard?

I go for the middle ground. I don’t just randomly pick stuff, I know basic rules. Girls are forced to think more carefully about that because they will be judged by other girls cause guys don’t usually judge other guys that much. Girls have it worse, but also they have a larger pool of clothes to choose from, so it’s bad in different ways.

Is there a way of dressing that provokes sexual assault?

I think that’s a dangerous question, because there’s no excuse for sexual violence and assault. You can’t say, “Oh, she was asking for it.” I think on a college campus, you shouldn’t have to worry about that, no matter how “slutty” people think you’re dressing. I think maybe it’s intelligent at certain gatherings to wear one thing or another, but that should be about the style and the setting, not about a concern for violence. That’s not fair.

At Amherst College the double standard applies to people in various ways according to how they view themselves in the college’s party culture. Fashion can be an outlet to either challenge or follow along with personal and societal boundaries that might try and define you. No matter what fashion taste you have, it was the unanimous opinion that a person’s sense of style should be their personal form of expression, not a target for unwanted advances, but this idea loses much of its power when one looks at the line that women have to balance between being the right amount sexy without looking too much like a slut.

“DO YOU BOO BOO”

MARGARET BANKS

Stroll around a college dorm on any given weekend, and you are sure to find students preparing for the night’s festivities. Some pack their book bags heavy with books as they head to the library. Perhaps, some set up a game of Monopoly in the common room. Or maybe, a few crawl into bed, craving sleep after a long week of papers and exams. And then, there are those who are preparing for the “turn-up.” Red solo cups, bottles and the smell of weed and alcohol fill the room as music blasts and students get dressed for the night ahead. Bodycon dresses, heels, skirts, crop tops and leggings are all pulled out of closets. Not long after, women leave the dorm dressed in outfits that have one word written all over them—slut.

Slut shaming, or judging a woman based on her sexual behaviors or provocative dress, occurs on many college campuses, especially on weekend nights when campuses are teeming with women looking to party. When I asked various students if they’d ever slut shamed anyone on campus based on her clothing, many students responded with multiple stories. One student told me of her first shameless slut shaming, “My friend and I decided to take a break from partying one Friday night and go to the movies instead. When we returned to campus, a group of drunken women dressed in short, tight dresses passed us. My friend and I instantly gave each other a look that said, ‘Look at these hoes’ and laughed.” Another student told me how she often sees groups of women heading down to the socials, and thinks to herself, “those damn whores.”

My first experience with slut shaming occurred as I walked into a Black Student Union party. Before the student security guard checked me, she looked me up and down, smirked and said, “There’s no need to really pat you down since your dress is so tight. I mean what could you possibly hide in there?” I was taken a back and just walked away, thinking to myself, “What the fuck? My dress isn’t even that tight.” I suddenly felt uncomfortable with my choice of clothing. Maybe my dress was too tight. Too short. Too revealing. These thoughts ran over and over in my mind. And then it occurred to me, who was this random woman to judge me just because my dress clung to my body? Why do I even care what she thinks? She doesn’t know my story. My older sister had warned me about slut shaming entering into college. “Don’t let people judge you based on your clothing; you’re more than what you wear.”

And that’s the main problem with slut shaming; one outfit becomes a woman’s whole identity. When asked about slut shaming, a junior at Wellesley College said, “slut shaming is a reflection of public control on women’s bodies. It promotes the idea that our bodies are only valuable when displayed a certain way.” As slut shaming seems to occur mostly amongst females, why would we as women want to promote

this idea? Our value should not be strengthened or weakened by our clothing choices.

You would think us women would be a bit more understanding of each other because we may put ourselves in the same situation when it comes to slut shaming. I know I personally don’t want to give off the wrong idea about myself with my clothing choices, but at the same time parties are sweaty and gross and it’s not fun to be covered in clothes. And plus, it’s nice to let a little skin show every now and then. I get it. So why do I feel the need to judge someone else for dressing provocatively? Now when I see women in party clothes, instead of thinking, “slut,” I try to think more along the lines of “Well go ahead with your bad self.” Or as good ole’ Kevin Hart says, “Do you boo boo.”



THE WRONG TYPE OF ATTENTION

JOHN DAVID NURME

Appearances say a lot about an individual. The first thing we notice when we meet someone new is hair color, eye color, skin-tone, and maybe how that skirt is revealing just a bit too much of her thighs. An interesting difference between how men and women are judged revolves around a certain set of degrading terms. It's rare to find someone yelling a derogatory name at a man dressed in nothing but a low-cut tank top with the sides cut open. Replace that masculine figure with a woman in a similar garment, however, and such name-calling is commonplace. Men and women are both judged based on their appearances, but it's the women's side that I took a deeper look into with a series of quick anonymous interviews about outfits.

These four images, ranging from quite revealing outfits to more conservative ones, were chosen from popular clothes shopping websites. Participants (both male and female) were asked to detail what they thought about the outfits in the context of a typical Amherst College "socials" party with plenty of loud music, dancing, and alcohol assumed to be present.

The first outfit was a very revealing tight leather dress, and interviewees pulled no punches when criticizing the outfit.



You're naked. Don't wear that outside. You look stupid. No intelligent woman would wear that.

I wouldn't want to be seen in that. It attracts the wrong type of attention. It leaves nothing to the imagination. She looks like an exotic dancer or a whore working the street.

The more revealing outfits consistently earned more comments about the intellect of the subject, or her lack thereof.

The second outfit, a school-girl-esque plaid short-skirt and tank top, received similar remarks,



She looks like a Halloween school girl. She doesn't look real. She looks like she's up to no good. She wants something.

Slutty school girl. Knee highs? She couldn't dance or bend over without flashing. The top's ok, but the skirt is ugly.

Male interviewees consistently responded by saying that she had the "hottest" outfit and that she was "asking for it," although they found it appealing. Both men and women thought that such an outfit could be perceived as a green-light for suggestive or sexual advances.

The third outfit received the most positive reviews, from female participants in particular.



Typical party dress. I would wear that to a party.

Cute, not bad, quirky. Showing a good amount of skin. Going to a party but staying classy. Nothing wrong.

Men and women thought this outfit was appropriately conservative and did not appear as an invitation for sexual advances.

Men tended to describe the fourth outfit as "formal", while women commented that the outfit was a bit too conservative.



Business, professional, I would wear to work or class. I wouldn't be judged but I'd be out of place at a party.

Overdressed, looks like she's going to work. She looks like a nun, too proper or conservative for a party.

It's a school uniform, and she's clearly not ready to party.

So what is the effect an outfit has on how people perceive you? The two most interesting and worrisome trends in my survey had to do with the perception of an individual's intelligence, and the idea of being open toward sexual advances. The more skin a woman shows, the less intelligent she appears, and the more open to sexual advances she becomes. The phrasing of comments, such as "asking for it" are concerning. Your choice in outfit may indicate to others your susceptibility, or desire for sexual advances or assault. While many of the people that advocate that women shouldn't be judged based on their style choices, when presented with revealing or sexualized outfits, use these same degrading adjectives and judgments to describe the character, intellect, and moral standards of the individuals wearing them. This is what your outfit says about you.



We thank the Office of the President of Amherst College, the Dean of Faculty's Office, the Departments of Art and the History of Art and Sexuality, Women's and Gender Studies, Danielle Hussey and the Women's and Gender Center, as well as Molly Mead, Gretchen Gano, Amanda Vann, Dana Bolger, Amanda Balezero, and Pete Mauney, in addition to all those who agreed to be interviewed.

The photographs were made collaboratively by Wendy Ewald and the students in Representing Equality. Each student chose two words to illustrate which relate to sexual respect. They brought props, and in a makeshift studio we shot photographs representing each word. Later the students wrote their words on transparencies over each image to create a digital sandwich.

